

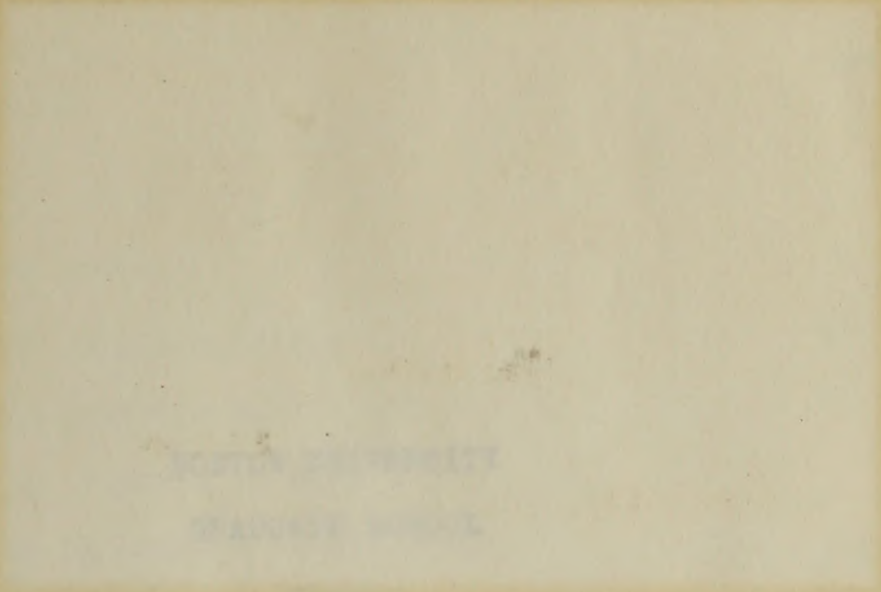
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Thesis

GEORGES COURTELINE AND THE FARCE

Submitted by

Leah Malkiel

(A.B., Radcliffe, 1927)

In partial fulfilment of requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

1930

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Georges Courteline and the Farce

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Georges Courteline and the Farce

Introduction

Writers of comedy usually find favor with their public. Laughter lives in the memory. In France, as in other countries, those who have been able to promote laughter have made themselves dear to us. The fifteenth century brought us such never-to-be-forgotten farces as "Maître Pathelin." In the sixteenth century our humor was supplied by the immortal Rabelais. Farces were still popular at this time, particularly so after the decree of 1548 forbidding mysteries. With the seventeenth century comes the French humorist, Molière, to be followed later by Beaumarchais and others of lesser rank. The last generation continues the illustrious line with the name of Georges Courteline, master of laughter.

In the words of Professor Waxman: "Yet if France cannot boast of a great national tragedy, she can offer something that no other modern European literature can equal -- a long unbroken line of masterpieces of national comedy. A pure Gallic stream has pervaded French comedy from the fifteenth-century "Maître Pathelin" to the contemporary farces of Georges Courteline."*

*Waxman: Antoine and the Théâtre-Libre

Others have made us laugh from time to time, some for the duration of their lives, others for a lesser period. Few, however, have long survived their physical death. Whether or not Courteline will remain famous is hard to tell just now. He has been dead less than a year.

His father, Jules Courteline, was a vaudeville actor, a man who could make a story crackling with wit, a humorist who also considered himself a journalist. His last novel volume is entitled "Les Tribunes d'Orléans." Although an author in his own right, he had other plans in view for his son. He wanted him to study medicine. Young Georges, however, showed a systematic aversion for study. He would not be allowed to attend at Orléans a law school, but he would be allowed to attend at Orléans a law school. He would be allowed to attend at Orléans a law school. He would be allowed to attend at Orléans a law school.

The Man

His Life

The friends who knew him well tell us that Georges Courteline was born at Tours on June 25th in the year 1858. Many authorities give the year as 1859, 1860, and even 1861, but Pierre Descaves tells us: "Il avait l'horreur de la vieillesse. Il trichait de deux ans avec son âge. Il accusait 69 ans. Il en avait en réalité 71. Et, consigne fidèlement observée, jamais ses petits-enfants ne l'appelèrent: grand-papa!..."*

His father, Jules Moinaux, was a vaudevillist of note, a man who could write a story bristling with wit, a humorist who made considerable mark as a journalist. His best known volume is entitled "Les Tribunaux Comiques." Although an author himself, he had other plans in view for his son; he wanted him to study science. Young Georges, however, showed a systematic aversion for study. He considered the school he attended at Meaux a jail, but had to suffer its discipline for six years. His complete disdain of things scholastic made his teachers consider

* Les Nouvelles Littéraires, 29 juin 1939

him as rather hopeless. As a pupil he was an unsatisfactory, reclusant, morose, undisciplined individual; yet he devoured the books of Jules Verne and he was interested in poetry. He began to write verses himself, and from 1876 on, had them published.

His literary occupations and his friendship with Jacques Madeleine and Auguste Germain so encroached upon his time that none was left for his scholastic program. He managed to pass in most of his courses, but Greek was his Waterloo. It was only his exceptional knowledge of Latin that enabled him to get his bachelor's degree. In 1879 his father required him to enter collège Rollin, but after his failure in the final examination, he was free to choose a career. He wanted to be a writer, but did not dare confess it.

Obtaining employment in the administration of "Bouillons Duval" he remained there exactly fifteen days. He had made the error of thinking that an employee's logic and initiative might have some rights in administrative matters.*

Immediately thereafter, acting on his father's orders, he joined the light cavalry, the 13^e chasseurs

* Roger Le Brun: Georges Courteline

à cheval, stationed at Bar-le-Duc. He soon acquired a reputation as a shirker, and although he had enlisted for five years, he obtained a prolonged leave after four months. At second-hand he bought a uniform much too big for him. After sewing his number on it, he went to the medical board and claimed he had lost weight. A cough cultivated for the occasion, plus his miserable, shrunken appearance, was enough. He didn't even have to describe his symptoms.

Returning to Paris, he succeeded in convincing the officials that he would soon be freed from military service, and so entered the employ of the Ministry of Justice. Here again, he lacked zeal. Instead of attending to his work, he paid a colleague half his salary to do his official work. His scheme was so carefully worked out that the man who replaced him even signed his name for him. Finally, the colleague, fatigued by his double duty, asked Courteline to do his own work while he had a short vacation. Suddenly finding it necessary to substitute for his substitute, Courteline preferred to resign. He had become too much accustomed to freedom.

At this time the son of the judicial chronicler, Jules Moinaux, was writing for the "République des

lettres" edited by Catulle Mendès. He was only twenty-one, but he had completed his shortened military service and had had his name on the government pay-roll. He had already become a man of letters. For subject matter he made use of his few months of military service and of his experiences as a government official.

Although he had been writing for some time, he really became seriously connected with literary media in 1881, when with his friends Jacques Madeleine and Georges Millet, he founded a revue: "Paris Moderne, revue littéraire et artistique." In the second number of this magazine, he for the first time signed a prose tale Georges Courteline to distinguish himself from his father.*

His veneration for Catulle Mendès persuaded the latter to collaborate with him, now that the "République des lettres" had gone under. Mendès brought to the revue not only his own strength, but that of his colleagues, Léon Dierx, Hérédia, and Banville. The readers of the earlier revue followed their favorite authors, and so became acquainted with Courteline, who

was at the time imitating Mendès and Gautier, particularly in his prose. The revue lived for only two years, but those two years represented for Courteline remunerated idleness.

In 1884 he began to write for another new publication: "Les Petites Nouvelles Quotidiennes" a newspaper that later gave its readers a volume of Courteline's chronicles. This was the first book that bore the name of Courteline.* His daily tales show an increasing tendency to pessimism and misanthropy in his search for current comedy. Finding it necessary one day to manufacture his chronicle, he wrote "La Soupe" an episode which brought him fame. This marked the beginning of his tales of life in the barracks. "He excelled in writing about military life, not the military life of the battlefields and shot and shell, but that of the barracks in peace time."**

In 1890 he began to write in "L'Écho de Paris" under the name Jean de la Butte. Until then he had treated his subjects as a portrait painter. Henceforth his writing was marked by caricature. The know-

*Turpin: Georges Courteline

**Boston Transcript, June 25, 1929

ledge of laughter and the means of provoking it become more apparent. His art of writing was now constantly following an upward curve. The influence of Catulle Mendès was still strong and Courteline kept forcing himself to satisfy the man he so admired.

His first dramatic successes represented the portrayal in new form of the subjects he had already treated in his tales. He sought to fix the attention of his contemporaries on the facts which offended his sensibilities. Without changing the essential idea he remolds his work until it presents a different aspect. He has the visual quality of dramatic art. Yet his glorious career in the theatre is due not to himself, but to André Antoine, who "discovered" him. The first of his plays, "Lidoire" played at the Théâtre-Libre in 1891, was simply an episode from "Les Gaîtés de l'Escadron" which had appeared in 1886.

From then on, he wrote tales and plays almost continuously, first writing an average of one a year, but later producing as many as seven plays in the

year 1897. He was not quite so prolific later, and there are long intervals between his latest works. "Mentons Bleus" appeared in 1906. His next play was "La Cruche" in 1909. Three years later we have his last play, "Les Linottes." He wrote no more. "Ma Philosophie" which appeared shortly after the war is a collection of thoughts gleaned from his various works, rather than a new book.

An interesting paradox is the fact that real glory, or rather official cognizance of his glory, came to him only after he had stopped writing. He was never elected to the French Academy, but he was made a member of the Goncourt Academy in 1926.

Taught by his father to observe people and things minutely, he wrote only of what he saw and heard. Like Beaumarchais, he became reconciled to laughing at everything, for fear he might have to weep too often. It was as if he were holding a concave mirror up to nature, distorting and dilating it in a most unbecoming manner.* At the height of his glory he had stopped producing with the statement that he had nothing more to say.

This very systematic soul had fairly lived in the café. His last café was the "Café des Oiseaux" where

*New Statesman, London, July 27, 1929

he had his table and played cards with the merchants of the neighborhood. His unpretentiousness prevented him from playing with men of letters, who praised his work. He said of his card partners: "Au moins, eux, ils ne me parlent pas de mon oeuvre!"*

Never did he voluntarily talk of what he had written. "Modest, unassuming, he was content day after day to sit in the same little café -- far away from the brilliant boulevards -- and there from five to seven in the evening enjoy his little game of "La Manille" -- the French equivalent of pinochle. Many times the games were interrupted for one of his funny stories -- he was an exquisite raconteur."**

His dress neglected, his costume was that of an unmanageable schoolboy. Not only his garb, but also his attitude was one of nonchalance. A thick-set man, he looked like a placid bureaucrat. There was something cross and almost hostile in his general attitude. Yet the "Mark Twain of France" laughed at everything and knew how to evoke laughter in the hearts of others. Suffering made him timid, and he fled from

*Les Nouvelles Littéraires, 29 juin, 1929, article by
Pierre Descaves

**Boston Transcript, June 25, 1929

the need of sympathy. Two things haunt him: old age and death. Even at twenty-five, he already regretted his adolescence.*

Until the very end he kept his taste for life. His last four years were a veritable torture. In January 1925 one of his legs was amputated. Six days before his death the second was removed. When he was refused his newspapers, he understood, and stoically awaited the death he had feared. Yet he died calmly, and his last words were to excuse himself for the trouble he was giving his friends.

The practical joker who had written without sarcasm or bitterness died on his seventy-first birthday, June 25, 1929. He had attained his goal: "Contenter à la fois, les simples et les difficiles, mériter le rire ingénu des bonnes d'enfants et des soldats -- et l'applaudissement de l'élite pour des raisons autres et meilleures, tel est l'X à dégager."**

*Turpin: Georges Courteline

**Quoted by Turpin p. 73

His Characteristics

Courteline was a small man of the race of lean cats, lost, floating in a large frock coat, his hair like drum sticks veneered to his forehead and thrown back behind his ears. His black eyes were small, like pear seeds set into a rather pale face. Intensely interested in all life, he was particularly fond of animals.

As patient as an ant, he persisted in his search for the best word or phrase. Pierre Wolff tells us that writing in collaboration with Courteline was no easy job, for: "Telle phrase écrite par moi était reprise par lui, huit jours durant, jusqu'à ce qu'elle le satisfasse."*

He left few books, for he wrote them all slowly and with difficulty. Research for specific words was quite a task, but he took his time. He was a sculptor who carved carefully the figures he depicted.

Courteline made many of his minute observations in the cafés that he frequented. Once accustomed to a café, he went there regularly. Always one would find

*Les Nouvelles Littéraires, 29 juin 1929

about him a picturesque group who gathered to drink, to play cards, and to plan according to their lights and tastes, works of art, literature, finance, or politics. When the café overflowed with strangers, there was always some little corner to hold the particular group which hung on the words of their hero. Not everyone could join this group, for he was cautious in the choice of his friends.*

He really lived in cafés for more than twenty years. Between a glass of beer and his open napkin, he would spread out his papers. It is there that he wrote with white ink on ruled paper of poor quality. Frequently he interrupted himself for a game of cards, a drink, or to grumble against adjutants, judges, and other office-holders. Then, suddenly he would go, leaving the bill to be paid by those who had lost or those who had bored him. He was happy in the café. When he traveled, it was to give pleasure to others. It was through the cafés that he became acquainted with cities.**

*Dominique Bonnaud in Les Annales, premier août 1929

**René Benjamin in Les Annales, premier juillet 1929

Logical, he seemed to have an instinct which made him see things in their natural sequence. Infinitely good himself, he couldn't conceive how anyone might be bad.* Even his hobbies had as motive some humanitarian thought, some gesture of pity for the worst reprobates. He continued to laugh even while he loathed, for he was a cynic who dealt in buffoonery.

Something was always happening to him, or so it seemed, for with his power of observation, every instant of the most colorless incident provided him with material for original literary development, material which attained great comic force.

The son of an indefatigable note taker, he was constantly searching and taking notes. His genius improved upon what he found. He could not tie himself down to a long piece of work. He felt the need of moving about, walking, changing the air and the place. His was a simple style, for he had a horror of big words. He used them only in mockery or to bring out the point of a joke.

It was his custom to work out a story with his eyes closed. Then he would tell it first to one friend and then to another, improving it as he went along. When he felt it had reached its height, he wrote it.

His modesty made him conceive of his work as that of a schoolboy. He felt that a true artist ought not to delight in what he had done, but ought to compare it sadly with what he had wanted to do. So, he wrestled with every sentence, modifying it endlessly. Pride had no part in his mocking attitude. Because he was unpretentious, he would not talk about himself. "--Je vous répète que je ne suis qu'un amateur. Ce qui donne à croire le contraire, c'est que j'ai persisté longtemps, et que je persiste encore...Aucune raison ne peut contre le temps; au fond, je suis un amateur qui a duré."*

A lover of honesty, freedom, youth and pleasure, his opposition to discipline and aspiration is apt to strike the sensitive as rather brutal. As to the scrupulous, he makes them wince with the things he is ready

*Quoted by Gaston Chérau in L'Illustration, 29 juin 1929

to forgive. He fights against affectation, humbug, pretension, and oppression. To the moralist he appears lax, for he is lenient towards the follies of youth. He sympathizes with the love of pleasure.

Watching men live, he indulgently considers them more stupid than wicked. He laughs at them, as if to make them thoroughly ashamed of themselves. Then, after pointing out the various foibles of mankind, he calmly stops writing.

He detested interviews and investigators. When he received a questionnaire, he acknowledged its receipt with a multigraphed circular letter stating that he was amused at the sender.

Pascal has said that a jester has a bad character. This is in line with Courteline. When he took a trip, he always had a bone to pick with the ticket collector. He couldn't go into a restaurant without having an argument with the waiter. He never played cards without some sort of discussion.*

Altogether, his characteristics make him one of us, a man with virtues and vices, neither too good nor too bad, simply a man who had the gift of writing what he saw.

*Pierre Descaves in *Nouvelles Littéraires*, 29 juin 1929

His Literary Background

Courteline's father had taught him to observe minutely. This accomplishment provided him with material. He never made use of anything he had not seen and heard.* From his father, too, he received much of his subject matter, notably from "Les Tribunaux Comiques."

He was very much interested in epochs previous to his own and at one time withdrew to Saint-Maude to reread Corneille and Hugo whom he greatly admired. He was fond of the Parnassians, certain Symbolists, and Racine. Molière was his god.

Catulle Mendès was the first to allot him the high place he occupies. Courteline calls him his master and friend, for it was Mendès who inculcated in him his taste for language and Boileau's precept: "Polissez et repolissez." Without such a check he might have yielded to facility, as did his father. Mendès speaks of him as a farceur in the style of an Aristophanes or a Racine, a fact which shows he attained his master's expectations.

He adored Mendès, Antoine, Wolff, and Lucien

*Martin du Gard in Nouvelles Littéraires, 29 juin 1929

THE LITERARY EVIDENCE

Correia's father had taught him to observe
attentively. This constant presence of his father
led him never to use of anything he had not
seen and heard. "I am not a poet," he remarked
upon of his subject matter, "I am a man of letters."

He was very much interested in sports previous
to his own and at one time - remember to Saint-Thomas
to travel Correia and hope that he finally arrived.
He was fond of the Portuguese, certain (perhaps)
and Basque. Correia was his god.

Correia's father was the first to show him the
high place he occupied. Correia called him his
master and friend, for it was Correia who introduced
in his taste for language and Correia's presence
"Familiarity breeds contempt." Correia was a man who
might have yielded to laziness, as did his father.
Correia speaks of him as a father in the style of
an affectionate son or a friend, a fact which shows he
attained his master's expectations.
He adopted Correia, Amador, Gelfi, and Lacerda

Descaves, but he venerated his father, Dumas père, and Hugo. Speaking of his father, even after his seventieth birthday, he still used to say "papa" with an indescribable tenderness. For André Antoine he felt admiration mingled with a little fear.

His theatrical fate is due to the fact that he met Antoine, who produced both "Lidoire" and "Bou-bouroche." The revival of the latter in 1897 made Courteline a satellite of Antoine. Both had the same dramatic ideal so often sought by playwrights who had their première at the Théâtre-Libre -- the depiction of a slice of life. They became very closely connected. Courteline used to be present at rehearsals, learning and suggesting.

Pierre Wolff, Lucien Descaves, and André Antoine were undoubtedly his oldest and dearest friends. Wolff and Courteline each had his first play performed at the Théâtre-Libre the same night. The friendship which started then was never marred.

Another group with whom he was very friendly comprised Curel, Porto-Riche, Brieux, and Émile Fabre.

Baroness, but as we entered his father, Baroness, and Hugo. Speaking of his father, even after his seventieth birthday, he still used to say "papa" with an indescribable tenderness. For André and Joëlle his affection mingled with a little fear. His theatrical face is one of the first that we

see. He is, who produces such "L'Amant" and "Les Femmes de l'Alcazar". The revival of the latter in 1927 made

Cocteau a specialist of the theatre. With him the most dramatic ideal is often found by playwrights who had their growth in the Theatre-Français -- the depiction of a slice of life. They become very closely connected. Cocteau is used to be present

at rehearsals, looking and suggesting.

Pierre Wolff, Baroness, and André Cocteau were undoubtedly his closest and nearest friends. Wolff and Cocteau seem to be the first play partners of the Theatre-Français. The friendship which existed then was never broken. Another group with whom he was very friendly consisted of Cocteau, Pierre Wolff, and André Cocteau.

These friends used to stay up with him until five in the morning counting the receipts of the performances.

With such friends Courteline ever moved in literary circles. Vigny's ivory tower was not for him, for he obtained situations and settings for what he wrote from his associations. For his work he needed not introspection, but observation.

His glory did not proceed from him, and he was right. It was enough that he had written in a language as pure and simple as that of Corneille and Racine, that he had described scenes of irrepressible truth. His work was a ten-fold title to fame: its documentary value and its literary quality. The most astonishing of his virtues is that of pleasing at the same time both his contemporaries and posterity.

*Hans Benjamin in Los Angeles, probably in 1908

**Journal des Debats, 5 juillet 1933

***Martin du Gard in Los Angeles, 1933

These friends used to get up with him each day
in the morning counting the number of the birds.

Notes.

With such things sometimes ever moved in
literary circles. Vignettes were never used for
it, for he retained his naturalness and simplicity for
what he wrote from his own observations. For his work
he needed not investigation, but observation.

His Popularity

What do contemporary critics say about our author? Courteline is not one of those authors, who is read because it is the style to do so. People like him. His force was well shown during the war, when it was necessary to find plays suitable for all types of men. Two authors were found acceptable: Molière and Courteline.* This is significant, as it groups together two outstanding humorists.

Henry Bidou tells us that Courteline immediately became popular, that his heroes could not help but live in the memory of men.** Once having read his plays, one cannot forget a M. Badin, a La Brige, a Lavernié, and certainly not Boubouroche.

His glory did not preoccupy him, and he was right. It was enough that he had written in a language so pure and simple that it defies the years, that he had described scenes of irresistible truth. His work has a two-fold title to live: its documentary value and its literary quality. The most astonishing of his merits is that of pleasing at the same time both simple people and learned men.***

*René Benjamin in Les Annales, premier juillet 1939

**Journal des Débats, 5 juillet 1939

***Martin du Gard in Les Nouvelles Littéraires, 29 juin 1939

Roland Dorgelès tells us he was a great classic writer who will live, for his art is the expression of the French genius as seen in La Fontaine and Molière.

Le Brun says that barring Labiche, a gay author has never been as much used as Courteline.* He has the gift of amusing people and he has passed the test. In 1927 he was played at the Comédie-Française no fewer than ten times.

Jules Lemaître in speaking of comic authors says: "Et je ne veux pas donner des rangs, et j'ignore si Courteline est le premier de la bande; mais je vois bien que sa gaîté est la plus copieuse, la plus colorée, et quoique souvent neuve dans ses formes, la mieux rattachée à la tradition."**

And isn't it worth noting that the younger generation of French writers called him the "Mark Twain of France?" ***

*Le Brun: Georges Courteline

**Impressions de Théâtre, 8^e série (1895) quoted by
Le Brun p. 76

***Boston Transcript, June 25, 1929

His Works

Courteline died the greatest of living humorists.* Yet he wrote little or nothing since the war. His fame rests on the work he had accomplished seventeen years before he died. This work consists of stories, plays, and sketches, for the most part portraits of ridiculous and pernicious creatures who all live their grotesque lives in earnest, complete complacency. His tales are a pertinent and caustic criticism of life.

His basic material comes from three sources: life in the barracks of the 13^e chasseurs at Bar-le-Duc, his work in the Department of Justice, and from the tendency shown by his father to study the relationship of men and women.

His few months of experience in the army give us his sketches of military life in both narrative and dramatic form. "Les Gaîtés de l'Escadron" (1886), "51^e Chasseurs" (1887), "Le Train de Sh. 47" (1891), and "Lidoire" (1891) are perhaps his most famous narrative works the material for which was gleaned from the barracks.

The appearance of "Les Gaîtés de l'Escadron" is

* "Affable Hawk" in New Statesman, London, July 27, 1929

His Works

Countless are the thousands of living witnesses.
Yet he wrote little or nothing since the war. His time
passed on the work he had accomplished seventeen years
before he died. His work consisted of studies, essays,
and sketches, for the most part positive of individualism
and personal qualities and his own little sketches
lives in earnest, honest, and sincere. His works are
a permanent and classic witness of life.

His basic material comes from three sources: life
in the practice of the 18th century as he is, his
work in the Department of Justice, and from the French-
by shown by his talent to study the relationship of

and his work.

His 18th century of experience in the way give us
his studies of military life in our narrative and
directly from "The History of the Revolution" (1880),
"The Revolution" (1887), "The French Revolution" (1891),
and "The Revolution" (1891) are perhaps his best known nar-
rative works. He collected for many years and found
the collection.

The appearance of "The History of the Revolution" is

is really the beginning of his reputation. He seems to remember his short stay in the barracks with the most profound bitterness.* He depicts the hilarious and detestable types that he himself met. As he puts it: "Ainsi ne dis-je que ce que j'ai vu, partant ce qui est vrai."* He expresses the indifference of officers, the pretentious and vindictive incapability of those of lower rank. We see here the psychology of the soldierly atmosphere pervaded by melancholy.

He doesn't obey the rule of the three unities of comedy, but he raises the depiction of comic character to a high level. His words are unexpected, but the words themselves are not funny. They are simple and straightforward.

"Messieurs les Ronds de Cuir" (1893), a masterpiece of extravagant farce, derives from his position as a government official. He wrote a large number of short stories and sketches depicting the ludicrous injustice of courts of law and the idiotic arrogance and mechanical behaviour of stupid officials.

The amusing odiousness of entirely egoistic women

*Le Brun: Georges Courteline.

is really the beginning of his temptation. He seems to
remember his short stay in the barracks with the same
profound bitterness. He knows the officers and
Napoléon very well and he himself well. As he puts it:
"I am on this side of the 1st of July, but on the other
side, I am on the other side of the indifference of officers, the
pretensions and vindictive insupportability of those of
lower rank. We are here the psychology of the soldier-
by which he is rewarded by calumny."

He doesn't deny the "rule" of the three unities of
comedy, but he takes the degradation of comic character
to a high level. His words are unexpected, but the
words themselves are not funny. They are simple and
straightforward.

"Régence des Bonnes de Paris" (1802), a water-
place of extraordinary talent, derives from his position
as a government official. He wrote a large number of
short stories and sketches depicting the life of the
justice of courts of law and the various attitudes and
eccentricities of official life.
The amusing character of many of these stories

is shown in his third type of work, this time mainly in play-form. Courteline as a dramatist is successful in the glorious field of the farce. Here he is always significant. "Boubouroche", one of his best farces, shows the clash between masculine weakness and feminine wiles, the old story of Samson worsted by Delilah.

Courteline's writing began with schoolboy verse in 1876. From then on, it drifted to the sketch, tale, and play. From 1886 on, the year of the publication of "Les Gaîtés de l'Escadron" his fame was assured. It did not wane. From then on he wrote something every year, and in 1897 he had seven new plays performed. He published nothing in 1900, but that was the year of the première of "L'Article 330." In 1904, however, we find nothing from his pen. In 1905 comes what some consider his finest play, the piece of writing that caused Courteline to be compared with Molière: "La Conversion d'Alceste." He is again writing, but now at greater intervals. The final play comes in 1912: "Les Linottes." His work

is known in his third type of work, and this time mainly in play-form. Goussier's work is known in the dramatic field of the novel. Here he is always significant. "Hobbesian", one of his best known, shows the close relation between the novel and the dramatic field. The old story of Goussier's work is well known.

Goussier's writing began with a novel in 1870. From then on, he turned to the dramatic field, and play. From 1880 on, the year of the publication of "Les Goussier" his work was reduced. It did not mean. From then on he wrote something every year, and in 1897 he had seven new plays performed. He published nothing in 1900, but that was the year of the premiere of "L'Atelier 200". In 1904, however, we find nothing from his pen. In 1905 some more came out, and in 1906 his last play, the piece of writing that caused Goussier to be compared with Molière: "Le Conversion d'Alphonse". He is again writing, but now at greater intervals. The final play comes in 1913: "Les Goussier". His work

is done. True, another volume does appear after the war, but "Ma Philosophie" is a collection of thoughts, not a new work.

All his work is in short units, whether narrative or dramatic. The plays are almost all in one act. Exceptions to his one-act rule are: "Les Joyeuses Comères de Paris" (1892) a fantasy in five acts written with Catulle Mendès; "Boubouroche" (1893) a masterpiece in two acts; "Les Gaîtés de l'Escadron" (1895) a revue of barrack life in three acts and nine tableaux; and "La Cruche" (1909) a comedy in two acts written in collaboration with Pierre Wolff.

His first plays showed him what his field of endeavor should be. Having written many tales, he felt the need of a more direct means of expressing what he wished to say. Even in his early days he had used dialogue. "Mais comme M. Jourdain, pour la prose, il faisait du théâtre sans le savoir."*

After Antoine called his attention to his dramatic ability, he devoted himself more and more to plays, and it is his plays that will live.

is done. The author's name does not appear after the
word, but "The Philosopher" is a collection of thoughts,
not a new work.

All this work is in short units, shorter narrative
or dramatic. The plays are placed all in one row. In-
teresting to his own time are: "Les Joyeux" (1872)
which is drama; (1873) a fantasy in five acts written
with Camille Maupassant; "Le Bonhomme" (1874) a master-
piece in two acts; "Les Gaietés de l'humanité" (1875)
a review of human life in three acts and nine sub-
jects, and "Le Grand" (1876) a comedy in two acts.

There is collaboration with Pierre Wolff.
The first play, however, was not the first of his
career should be. Having written many plays, he felt
the need of a more direct means of expressing what he
wanted to say. Even in his early days he had used the
idea. "This comes from the heart, from the soul, it is
all in the heart and in the soul."

After having called his attention to his drama-
tic activity, he devoted himself more and more to plays
and it is his plays that will live.

The Farces

In the theatre Courteline has a slow-developing delicious humor with pauses that allow one the better to relish it. The laughter occasioned by his plays awakens the reader to deep reflexion, for Courteline is always significant. He knows how to make use of indignation and subtle observation in the service of humor. Although he is always careful to make his plays seem probable, yet his misanthropy urges him to choose by preference characters that are comic in a rather unpleasant way.*

As for his material, his sources are the same, whether his writing is for the theatre or to fill a column in a newspaper. The material he gathered while he wore the soldier's uniform has given us: "Lidoire" and "Les Gaîtés de l'Escadron".

Most of his plays, however, are rollicking judicial farces, making sport of the injustices committed in courts of law. He tells us: "La justice n'a rien à voir avec la Loi, qui n'en est que la déformation, la charge et la parodie."** He proves this time and time again, in "Un Client Sérieux", in "L'Affaire Champignon",

*Le Brun: Georges Courteline

**Courteline: L'Article 330

The Forces

is the life of the individual and a slow-developing
deliberate march with pauses that at one time or another
is felt as. The language concerned by his plays
seems to be based on deep reflection, for Constantine
is always significant. He knows how to make use of
indignation and subtle observation in the service of
beauty. Although he is always careful to make his
plays seem probable, yet his misanthropy urges him to
express by preference characters that are comic in a
rather unpleasant way.

As for his material, the sources are the same,
and the style is for the theatre or for the
column in a newspaper. The material he gathered
while he was the editor's assistant has given us
"Monsieur" and "Les Femmes de L'Alger".

Most of his plays, however, are collected in
other forms, making part of the literature mentioned
in course of time. He tells us: "The justice of the
very word is lost, for when we are in the theatre, in
charge of a play, we give this and that
again, in 'Un Oiseau de nuit', in 'L'Alger'."

in "Blancheton père et fils", in "Petin, Mouilliarbourg et Consorts", in "Les Balances", and of course in "L'Article 330."

As for his third source, a great number of his farces are built upon some phase of sex relations. In some cases, the couple is married. In others, the relationship is one not so generally sanctioned. Plays of this latter group contain such masterpieces as "Boubouroche" and "La Cruche."

An analysis of the plays will show which phases are developed in each.

The play was its performance in 1892. In 1892, the author, as many other unknown authors, had been revealed to Courteline the secret of his genius and persuaded him to continue writing plays in preference to tales. The initiator of the Théâtre-Libre admired Courteline. Two years after he recognized the ability of the writer of "L'Article 330" he produced another play by the same man. This time a play acclaimed by all the critics, "Boubouroche."

"Modern Théâtre, Bayard et Cie."

in "Bismarck's Role at the Congress", in "Festschrift, Bismarck's

et Congress", in "Das Reich", and of course in

"Article 230."

As for the third source, a great number of his

theses are built upon some phase of sex relations.

In some cases, the couple is married. In others, the

relationship is one not so generally sanctioned. Plays

of this latter group contain such masterpieces as

"Bismarck's Role at the Congress" and "The Circle."

In analysis of the plays will show which phases

are developed in each.

"Lidoire"*

"Lidoire" like most of Courteline's plays, is a one-act farce. It is his first bit of writing in dramatic form, although the material had already been used in the tales based upon his experiences at Bar-le-Duc. It is a character study of a soldier living in the barracks, really no more than a sketch of military life. Lidoire is the good-natured protagonist: a man who answers for his friends at roll-call; takes care of a drunken neighbor on a frosty night, and makes him comfortable; and who meekly goes to prison for the noise the other fellow has been making. In just a few pages this play creates a vivid picture of a character that is true to life.

The play owes its performance to André Antoine who mothered so many then unknown authors. Antoine revealed to Courteline the secret of his genius and persuaded him to continue writing plays in preference to tales. The initiator of the Théâtre-Libre admired Courteline. Two years after he recognized the ability of the author of "Lidoire" he produced another play by the same man, this time a play acclaimed by all the critics, "Boubouroche."

*Modern-Théâtre, Fayard et Cie.

"Boubouroche"*

This is perhaps Courteline's most famous play. Here he becomes philosophic and his comedy is discreet. It is a magnificent character study of a man who is so gullible that after he has seen the man with whom his mistress has deceived him, upon a gesture from her is ready to deny that the man was there. The delightful climax comes when he goes out to kick the man who told him his mistress was untrue.

There is a charming simplicity in the narration. The hero is so typical that the reader readily pictures him. The choice of subject is not new. Neither is the manner of treating it unusual. Yet the scenes, incidents, and adventures have a fantastic glamor. The penetrating observation of the author plus his genial wit make the play. It is simply a caricature of the life of the petit bourgeois, but it is admirably done. It is on the basis of "Boubouroche" that many critics have likened Courteline to Molière.

François Turpin goes even further.** He claims that here Courteline showed his scorn for women with a force that Poquelin did not attain. He says that

*Modern-Théâtre, Fayard et Cie.

**Turpin: Georges Courteline

if Dandin is more probable, Boubouroche is truer. Dandin, knowing his wife deceives him, but unable to catch her, is ready to drown himself. Boubouroche catches his mistress, but lets her persuade him she is shielding a family secret in not explaining to him the presence of the other man.

Although this play is one of the few of Courteline's that has more than one act, it is no longer than some of his plays in a single act. The situation calls for two distinct settings.

The first act takes place in a café where Boubouroche and his friends discuss mistresses in general, and the fact that he has been faithful to one for eight years. A stranger tells him that all women are unfaithful and that Adèle is deceiving him. Although he doesn't believe it, he leaves the café.

The second act is at the home of Adèle, where we see this second Célimène entertain André. At the arrival of Boubouroche, André is installed in a closet where he has a chair, his books, and even an artificial light. Boubouroche discovers him and even takes his card, but in spite of the fact that

he has seen and heard André, he allows Adèle to convince him that she is true to him.

Though it seems unbelievable in the telling, the play itself is very real. Courteline's comic power is here at its height. The simplicity of action and the fine drawing of character make the play classic. Even though he observes through a magnifying glass, Courteline is sincere, and he certainly gives us a picture of irresistible drollery in "Boubouroche." It is pure farce, and a skillful parody on the "ménage à trois." The character analysis is keen, showing clearly the cowardice of a man in love. The wrath of Boubouroche is overwhelming, but a few words from Adèle are enough to make him excuse himself for suspecting her. There is an intense contrast between the candor of the hero and the wiles and trickery of his mistress.

"Il faut le lire pour en comprendre la sévère ordonnance, la classique simplicité, pour s'abandonner à son comique énorme, en ressentir l'effroyable amertume, en admirer la syntaxe impeccable et la

he has seen and heard Anne, he allows Anne to say

what she thinks and he says to him.

There is a certain responsibility in the matter.

The story itself is very real. Conscience's point

of view is that of the subject. The simplicity of

action and the time drawing of the novel are the

very old story. Even though he has never reached a

negative phase, Conscience is sincere, and he

certainly gives us a picture of his life and his

life in "Conscience". It is pure fiction, and a

philosophical picture of the "savage's life". The story

after analysis is clear, showing clearly the power

of a man in love. The world of Conscience

is overthrown, but a few words from Anne are

enough to make him aware himself for something

more. There is an intense contrast between the two

not of the world and the life and history of his

life.

"It is not in his power to understand in every

circumstance, in his life and his life, but a moment

and a moment more, an instant, a moment, a moment

more, an instant in which he understands it is

période musicale, le tableau définitif d'une peu reluisante humanité."*

"La Peur des Coups" **

A little over a year later Courteline gives us another play that has become classic. This time he goes back to what he conceives is his measure for the stage, the one-act play. In "La Peur des Coups" he gives us a wonderful picture of cowardice.

There are but two characters. He and she return from a late party in a quarrelsome mood. He objects to the fact that she has been flirting. Her anger is aroused. If he felt so badly, why didn't he tell the other fellow so? Evidently he was afraid of being hurt, for he has no blood in his veins. Such statements annoy the poor man, and he protests. He didn't want a public scandal. He will write to the man; he does, but doesn't dare mail the letter. The next time he sees the obnoxious individual, he will kick him. Knowing her customer, the woman provides him with the man's name and address.

*Turpin: Georges Courteline

**Charpentier et Fasquelle, 1895

periods of time, he has been talking to me

and he has been talking to me

"In fact the George"

A little over a year later George gives

me another play and it becomes classic. This time

he goes back to what he considers is his secret

for the stage, the one-act play. In "The Girl

George" he gives me a wonderful picture of a woman.

There are two characters. One is a

man from a large party is a delightful mood. He

appears to me for the first time has been thinking

that he is a man. It is not so badly, why

didn't he tell the other fellow and evidently he

was afraid of being hurt. For he has no blood in

his veins. Such a statement among the poor man, and

he protests. He didn't want a public scandal. He

will write to me now, he says, but doesn't dare

until the letter. The next time he sees me he comes

in, he will tell me. Knowing her a secret,

the woman knows him with her own eyes and address.

*George: George's Character

*George: George's Character

Even this has no effect. The man begins blaming his mother-in-law for his misery. Then appears the ever-ready weapon of woman -- tears, and everything is cleared up. Story? No! It is simply a scene of home life depicted in such a way as to make us call the play a little masterpiece of character delineation.

"Les Gaîtés de l'Escadron"*

The next of Courteline's plays, written in collaboration with Édouard Norès, is a revue of life in the barracks. "Les Gaîtés de l'Escadron" is longer than most of his plays, for its three acts are divided into nine tableaux. It is based on his earlier narrative work of the same name.

Here Courteline laughs at the inelegance and naiveness of soldiers, their exuberant joys, and the bizarreness of the officers. We see officers of descending rank, where each man hands the dirty work over to the man below him. There is no story here, and but little characterization. It is rather a

*Modern-Théâtre, Fayard et Cie.

picture of the elemental psychology of soldierly environment. The abundance of army slang lends a living realism of detail. The freedom of language simply adds to the picturesque scenes.

The author has much opportunity to exhibit his extraordinary faculty of observation aided by his wonderful memory for colors, shapes, and sounds. He knows how to arrange his material, and makes the scenes gay; although the sadness of the situation permeates the play. It is a picture of the manners and customs of the army, the weakness of the private pitted against the strength of the superior officers.

The play is decidedly one to be seen rather than read, for often several characters are scheduled to speak together. Reading their speeches in succession may give one all the words, but makes one lose the effectiveness of many extremely funny situations. Courteline makes sport of the servility of the poor soldier and of the ridiculous situations created by it. The revolt inspired by continuous cringing submission is simply another aspect of the conditions depicted.

picture of the elemental psychology of solidarity
involvement. The audience of any play tends to
living reality of death. The freedom of language
simply adds to the picture's force.

The author has much opportunity to exhibit his
extraordinary facility of observation aided by his
wonderful memory for colors, shapes, and sounds.
He knows how to arrange his material, and makes the
scenes gay, although the sadness of the situation
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than read, for often several characters are scheduled
to speak together. Hearing their speeches is an
experience that give one all the words, but makes one
lose the effectiveness of many extremely funny situa-
tions. Consequently a lack of the activity of
the plot makes one of the ridiculous situations
created by it. The revolts inspired by conditions
creating revolution is simply another aspect of the
conditions depicted.

His nature was sensitive and he was cut to the quick by what he saw in the army. Plays like "Les Gaîtés de l'Escadron" are informative as well as amusing.

"La Cinquantaine"

Several months later we see a very different type of play. This time there is but one scene, and that reminds one of a vaudeville sketch that may so often be seen between two moving pictures. The play gets its name from its theme song, "La Cinquantaine" by Hugo and Wagner.

It is a picture of an elderly couple who sing in public in order to support themselves. Their song is one of love, but between lines they call each other by every unkind name that they can possibly remember. The single act is simply a vivid contrast between the attitude of two people to each other, and an affectation of what they consider their attitude ought to be.

*Flammarion, 1898

His nature was sensitive and he was cut to the
quick by what he saw in the army. "Days Like
Others" is a "document" as informative as well as
moving.

"La Cinquantaine"

Several months later we see a very different
type of play. This time there is but one scene, and
that remains one of a veritable sketch that may as
often be seen between two moving pictures. The play
gets its name from its theme song, "La Cinquantaine"
by Hugues and Berger.

It is a picture of an elderly couple who stay
in public in order to support themselves. Their
love is one of love, but between lines they tell each
other of every married man that they can possibly
remember. The sketch is simply a vivid portrait
between the attitudes of two people to each other, and
an affection of what they consider their attitude
ought to be.

"Petin, Mouilliarbourg et Consorts"*

The next of Courteline's plays to be performed was the first of his series of judicial farces. In "Petin, Mouilliarbourg et Consorts" the scene is laid in court. Here one sees the plaintiff jailed while the man who has been summoned to court and proved guilty pays a ridiculously small fine. A lawyer makes a long-winded speech that attacks his client. When his attention is called to the fact that he is simply a defense lawyer and not the prosecuting attorney, he changes his speech, but now he speaks in favor of the wrong man. By the time he is straightened out, the presiding judge bars further discussion.

Another case that comes up at this court session is one in which the judge is a libertine who complacently smiles at the adulteress and rebukes both plaintiffs and witnesses. He has the woman's husband imprisoned, while he makes an appointment to meet the adulteress. The arguments advanced in the case are, to say the least, indelicate.

The play makes the reader grin in amusement. Yet he realizes how faithful a picture Courteline has drawn

*Flammarion, 1899

"Pettit, Mobilizing at Constance"

The next of Constance's plays to be performed was the first of his series of judicial farces. In "Pettit, Mobilizing at Constance" the case is laid in court. Here we see the plaintiff called to the bar who has been accused of court and proved guilty by a ridiculously small fine. A lawyer takes a long-winded speech that attacks his client. When his attention is called to the fact that he is already a defense lawyer and not the prosecuting attorney, he changes his speech, but not his attitude in favor of the wrong man. By the time he is finished even out, the presiding judge has turned discussion. Another case that comes up at this court session is one in which the judge is a little bit confused. He is called at the adjournment and returns both plaintiff and witness. He has the woman's husband imprisoned, while he makes an appointment to meet the defendant. The arguments advanced in the case are, to say the least, incredible. The play makes the reader grin in amazement. Yet he realizes how valuable a picture Constance has drawn

of some of the evils in a so-called court of justice. The vivid portrayal makes one think of the similar situation in Anatole France's "Crainquebille."

"Le Droit aux Étrennes"*

"Le Droit aux Étrennes" is a vaudeville in one act. The play is a caricature of types with especial emphasis on the protagonist, Landhouille. He himself receives no gifts, but is called upon to give gifts not only to his friends and family, but also to those who have most hurt him. Four different people whom he does not even recognize call upon him the first day of the year to demand their gifts. Among them is a former loved one who made his life miserable. No matter what their relationship to him, all feel that the fact they know his name entitles them to special consideration on the first of January. The play is a satiric one directed against the custom of enforced gift giving.

*Charpentier, 1896

of some of the evils is a so-called "evil"
the vivid portrayal of the evils of the
also in the "Evil"

"The Evil and the Good"

"The Evil and the Good" is a play in one
act. The play is a caricature of types and
characters on the stage. He himself
receives no gift, but is called upon to give gifts
not only to his friends and family, but also to those
who have more than him. Four different people whom
he does not even recognize will upon him the first
day of the year to demand their gifts. Among them
is a former lover who has made his life miserable.
He makes what seems a relationship to him, all too
late the fact that he has made his name and his
special connection in the first of January. The
play is a satire on the custom of
demanding gifts.

"Un Client Sérieux"*

Very likely Courteline inherited the humor which caused him to write "Un Client Sérieux" for the same strain is apparent in his father's work.** Here we have a picture of real jesting produced by Courteline's search for perfect liberty and justice in the very imperfect courts of justice.

The situation is brought about by the fact that a café customer has so monopolized the newspapers, cards, and service that he has driven away the other frequenters. The café owner hales him into court to get rid of him, for he only has one drink a day, anyway. The defendant then goes on to prove that by mixing water and sugar with his drink in various proportions he produces seven distinct beverages. The proceedings here are positively farcical, for each speaker is continuously interrupted, making sport of the situation.

In addition, there is the unusual situation that arises when the smooth talker is in turn called to plead the defense and take the part of the prosecuting attorney. He extricates himself splendidly by using

*Modern-Théâtre, Fayard et Cie.

**Martin du Gard in Les Nouvelles Littéraires, 29 juin 1929

the same arguments against his client that a moment before he used in his defense. His very eloquent speech, if not good law, is at least entertaining. Finally, the very serious client is acquitted, after the reader has been forced to laugh aloud at the fun of the play.

This judicial farce is one of Courteline's very finest. In it he attacks the abuses and iniquities of red tape. He wants to brand judicial stupidity, and he succeeds admirably.

"Hortense, couche-toi!"*

"Hortense, couche-toi!" is another farce that makes sport of the law. Here the tricks of law are used to show that everyone but the owner is master over a given piece of property. The tenant is entitled to extraordinary benefits under extraordinary conditions. A new would-be tenant also has definite privileges. The proprietor, however, is left out in the cold, for so the law reads. M. Saumatre says: "D'où je conclus qu'étant donné une maison dont je

the same arguments against his office as a member
before he was in his office. His very eloquent
speech, if not good law, is at least interesting.
Finally, the very session itself is noteworthy. After
the speaker has been forced to leave at the time
of the play.

This historical fact is one of Grotius's very
finest. In it he attacks the abuses and limitations
of the state. He shows to what political authority
and he succeeds admirably.

"Grotius, however, is not
"Grotius, however, is not
makes report of the law. Here the limits of law are
used to show that everyone but the owner is master
over a given piece of property. The owner is not
titled to exercise property rights under extraordinary
conditions. A new world of property also has been
created. The property, however, is left out of
the world, for in the law states. U. Grotius says:
"And he cannot do without some one who is not to

suis seul propriétaire, tout le monde y est maître, excepté moi?" La Brige answers: "Naturellement." Thus does Courteline benefit by his stay in the Department of Justice. He has learned enough to show us the ridiculous results of many laws.

"Monsieur Badin"*

The shortest of Courteline's plays, "Monsieur Badin", is yet one of the most amusing. It is really funny, and even the serious reader is forced to laugh as he reads the clever lines. The situation is certainly unusual. A man complains that office work bores him. On every imaginable pretext he absents himself from his office. If he isn't absent, he is at least late. Yet he wants an increase in pay! Comparing himself to other workers, he says: "Mes collègues ne donnent au bureau que leur zèle, leur activité, leur intelligence, et leur temps; moi, c'est ma vie que je lui sacrifie!" Monsieur Badin is so real, so intense a character, that if Courteline had no other claim to fame, he would deserve to live as the creator of M. Badin.

*Modern-Théâtre, Fayard et Cie.

and well acquainted with it is made by the writer,
excepted only. In this answer, "Hypocritism."
Thus does the writer benefit by his story in the
Department of Justice. He has learned enough to
show us the ridiculous results of many laws.

"Hypocritism"

The chapter of Justice, the "Hypocritism"
"Hypocritism", is yet one of the most amusing. It is really
funny, and even the serious reader is forced to laugh
as he reads the clever lines. The situation is not
faintly amusing. A man complains that office work costs
him. On every imaginable pretext he absents himself
from his office. If he is absent, he is at least
late. Yet he comes on business in the morning. Comparing
himself to other workers, he says: "How different we
become as business men in this hypocritical, late
intelligence, we find words, well, what we find the
late hypocrite." Hypocritism is so real, so human
a character, that if the writer had no other claim to
fame, he would deserve to live as the greatest of all writers.

"L'Extra-Lucide"*

Something in a little different vein is "L'Extra-Lucide." This time Courteline shows us a fortune-teller who extorts money from a husband who is frantic since the disappearance of his wife. After a good deal of manoeuvring to get the proper atmosphere, and after she has twice collected money from him, she tells him that his wife is with another man whom she identifies by his Christian name.

Again, it is certainly not the story which holds our interest, but Courteline's inimitable way of presenting it. The dialogue is witty, and the character portrayal is unforgettable.

"Une Lettre Chargée"***

The red-tape incidental to obtaining a registered letter is assailed in "Une Lettre Chargée." La Brige, when he calls for his letter, finds the clerk is an old friend of his. Yet the clerk may not hand him the letter, for technically, he has not proven his identity. It develops that according to law, he may have another forge his name and accept the letter for

*Flammarion, 1899

**Modern-Théâtre, Fayard et Cie.

"L'Extra-Indice"

Reverting to a little different vein is "L'Extra-

Indice." This time Goussier shows us a fortune-

teller who extracts money from a husband who is in a

bit since the disappearance of his wife. After a

good deal of maneuvering to get the proper money-

there, and then she has twice collected money from

him, she tells him that his wife is with another

man when she identifies by his Christian name.

Again, it is certainly not the story which

holds our interest, but Goussier's treatment

way of presenting it. The dialogue is witty, and

the character portrayal is unforgettable.

"Une Lettre Change"

The red-tape incident of obtaining a registered

letter is entitled in "Une Lettre Change." In this,

when he calls for his letter, finds the clerk is an

old friend of his. Yet the clerk may not hand him

the letter, for technically, he has not proven his

identity. It develops that according to law, he may

have another forged and must accept the letter for

Translation, 1933

"L'Extra-Indice", pages 48-50

him, but that when he calls for it, he cannot have it on the clerk's recognition. Such is the bureaucratic law of which Courteline makes sport.

"Théodore cherche des Allumettes"*

Another very funny play that is pure farce is "Théodore cherche des Allumettes." It is the story of a young inebriate who cannot unlock his door at three in the morning because he has no matches. When he finally gets in, after arousing the neighbors by his noise, he does all manner of silly things. He falls, puts his fingers in a bottle of ink, opens the buffet instead of the window, inhales the odor of gruyère cheese without knowing it, and comments on the delightful May evening. Again there is no real plot, but the events link in a well-wrought chain. They call out bursting laughter before one has a chance to reflect on the silliness. It is all parody, but it is all funny. Not being able to pronounce the name of the street because of his condition, Théodore decides French is a poor language,

*Modern-Théâtre, Fayard et Cie.

him, but that when he calls for it, he cannot have
it on the other's recognition. Such is the nature
of the law of which Descartes makes sport.

"Theodore's Character as a Philosopher"

Another very funny thing that is said is
"Theodore's Character as a Philosopher." It is the story
of a young philosopher who cannot unlock the door at
three in the morning because he has no key. When
he finally gets in, after arousing his neighbors by
his noise, he does all manner of silly things. He
falls, puts his fingers in a bottle of ink, opens
the shutter instead of the window, examines the door
of Gyro's house without knowing it, and comments
on the silliness of the evening. Again there is no
real plot, but the events link in a well-constructed
chain. They tell out perfectly in the end and
are a good deal of fun. It is all
ridiculous, but it is all funny. Not being able to
pronounce the name of the street because of his con-
fusion, Theodore declares French is a poor language.

and asks his father whether he doesn't regret not being a Spaniard. The entire farce is just one laugh after another.

"Gros Chagrins"*

Another bit of merry wit in which but two characters play a part is "Gros Chagrins." Here a woman comes to a friend of hers to complain about the infidelity of her husband. However, she continually gets side-tracked, and forgets her woes in learning a new dance step that she wants to use that evening, for she is going out with her husband. Here we have an excellent picture of the care-free woman who is so high-strung that she weeps and laughs successively. At moments here the satire is bitter, but Courteline always brings out a laugh. The play shows the instability of feminine ideas and the manifestation of animal indifference that the author conceived to be so powerful in woman.

*Modern-Théâtre, Fayard et Cie.

and says his first answer was "Yes" but
being a Quaker. The Quaker faith is based on
high moral standards.

"Old Quakers"

Another bit of early life in which he and other
actors play a part is "Old Quakers". Here a woman
comes to a friend of hers to complain about the in-
fidelity of her husband. However, she continues
to be wife-tied, and leaves her room in leaving
a note to say that she will be out that evening.
For she is going out with her husband. Here we have
an excellent picture of the Quaker woman who is so
high-spirited that she keeps and keeps absolutely
at her own pace. The Quaker is bitter, but Quakerism
always brings out a laugh. The day shows the inces-
sant of Quaker life and the satisfaction of
which is derived from the Quaker's attitude to be
no longer in woman.

"Modern Quakers", by J. H. C.

"La Voiture Versée"*

"La Voiture Versée" is a merry comedy suggestive of Parisian corruption. A young couple have a rather peculiar business. The woman regularly manages to be upset from her carriage near a strange young man. The latter rescues her and takes her home where she plays upon his sympathies and then asks him to wait while she leaves the room. In the interval, her husband arrives, finds the stranger, and extorts money from the young man, who is now afraid of being attacked. After he has parted with his money, he^{is} shown out with instructions not to return. The lady and her husband then figure out their income for the day.

"Les Boulingrin"*

Courteline has given us another satire on married life in "Les Boulingrin." This time a guest comes to call on a couple because he is under the impression that they are very happy and get along very well together. He is unpleasantly surprised at their entrance. They quarrel most violently and vie with each other in being disagreeable. The guest is the unfortunate obstacle

*Modern-Théâtre, Fayard et Cie.

"Le Village Vert"

"Le Village Vert" is a very lovely suggestive of French country life. A young couple have a rather peculiar business. The woman regularly manages to be absent from her cottage near a strange young man. The latter teaches her and takes her home where she plays upon a symphonie and then asks him to wait while she leaves the room. In the interval, her husband arrives, finds her stranger, and extracts money from the young man, who is now afraid of being arrested. After he has parted with his money, he returns and with instructions not to return. The lady and her husband then light out their income for the day.

"Les Bonheurs"

Conscience has given us another edition of married life in "Les Bonheurs". This time a couple comes to call on a couple because he is under the impression that they are very happy and get along very well together. He is unpleasantly surprised at their conduct. They quarrel most violently and vie with each other in being disagreeable. The guest is the unfortunate person

over whom they quarrel, for each is striving to do things for him first. They offer him a seat, and fight over who shall place it. The result is that the guest falls and is bruised. There is a great deal of horse-play and very little delicacy, but the farce offers abundant opportunity for laughter.

"Le Gendarme est sans pitié"*

"Le Gendarme est sans pitié" is another courtroom farce with some very amusing conversation, particularly in the comparison of the maladies of an old dog with those of an old man. The story deals with a merciless officer who reads evil into everything he sees. He arrests one person after another until his superior officer shows him that he is not always perfect himself, that at that particular time he should be wearing another uniform. (He has been delayed in court purposely by his superior.) Now there is a case against the officer. This will not be dropped unless he drops the case he has against an old friend of the superior officer. The farce

*Modern-Théâtre, Fayard et Cie.

over which they quarrel, but each is striving to do
the best for his friend. They offer him a seat, and
light over him small place is. The result is that
the guest falls and is bruised. There is a great
deal of horse-play and very little delicacy, but
the hosts offers abundant opportunity for laughter.

"Le Bonhomme est une pitié"

"Le Bonhomme est une pitié" is another story
from France with some very amusing conversation, but
especially in the comparison of the salutes of the
old and with those of the new. The story deals
with a mercenary officer who turns evil into every-
thing he sees. He attacks one person after another
until his superior officer orders him that he is not
always correct himself, that at that particular time
he should be wearing another uniform. (he has been
delayed in court purposely by his superior.) Now
there is a case against the officer. This will not
be dropped unless he drops the case he has against
an old friend of the superior officer. The story

is ended when the merciless man shows his greatness of soul by destroying the complaint.

"L'Affaire Champignon"*

Courteline did not always write alone. In collaboration with Pierre Veber he developed a judicial fantasy drawn from an episode in his father's "Les Tribunaux Comiques." "L'Affaire Champignon" is rollicking fun. The incidents are simple enough. A husband and wife accuse each other of being unfaithful and their partners in guilt are in court with them. The wife, though proved guilty, is acquitted. The husband is imprisoned. It is not the facts, however, but the sparkling wit of the dialogue that makes the reader laugh out loud. To quote simply one reply of the husband to the judge: "Eh bien, elle est raide! Je n'avais pas le droit de battre avec une canne à moi, dans mon domicile à moi, une femme à moi, qui me faisait des queues avec un cousin à moi?"

*Flammarion, 1899

is asked about the possibility of seeing his mistress
at some time in the future.

"The Little Companion"

Constance and her sister Alice, in 181-
1820, with their mother, went to the
Fitzroy house from 181-1820 to 181-1820.
The house was then in the hands of the
Fitzroy family. The house was then in the
hands of the Fitzroy family.

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1820, with their mother, went to the
Fitzroy house from 181-1820 to 181-1820.
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Fitzroy family. The house was then in the
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"Blancheton père et fils"*

Pierre Veber also collaborated with Courteline in his next play, which had the same source. "Blancheton père et fils" is another farce of the same nature, but it is not as funny as the previous one. For one thing it is more involved and less easy to follow. The relationship of the people on trial is so confused that even the judge cannot make out what it is, much less the poor reader. Since the judge cannot tell what happened, he applies the proverb: "Dans le doute abstiens-toi" and dismisses the case. I can do no better.

"Le Commissaire est bon enfant"***

We have already seen that one of Courteline's pet subjects is laughing at red tape and its instigators. In "Le Commissaire est bon enfant" which he wrote in collaboration with Jules Lévy, he shows us a commissioner's office and the events which take place there. There is a funny turn to every case that comes up. Perhaps the one that is most impressive is the one in which a man brings in a watch he has found. A veritable agony of red tape follows. He must give his life histo-

*Flammarion, 1900

**Modern-Théâtre, Fayard et Cie.

"Bismarck's part in the"

War of 1870-71 also collaborated with Bismarck

in the next play, which had the same name. "Bismarck-

ten years at this" is another form of the same name.

But it is not as funny as the previous one. For one

thing it is more involved and less easy to follow.

The relationship of the people in the play is so confused

that even the judge cannot make out what is happening.

Even the poor teacher. Since the judge cannot tell

what happened, he applies the proverb: "There is doubt

about it all" and dismisses the case. I can do no better.

"The Bismarckian and his enemies"

We have already seen that one of Bismarck's part

subjects is laughing at the type and the investigators.

In "The Bismarckian and his enemies" which is written in

collaboration with Julius Levy, he shows us a comedy-

showing the office and the events which take place there.

There is a funny scene to every case that comes up. For-

haps the one that is most impressive is the one in

which a man brings in a woman he has found. A veritable

agency of red tape follows. He must give his life story-

"Bismarckian, 1900

"Bismarckian, 1900, 1901, 1902, 1903, 1904, 1905, 1906, 1907, 1908, 1909, 1910, 1911, 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915, 1916, 1917, 1918, 1919, 1920, 1921, 1922, 1923, 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938, 1939, 1940, 1941, 1942, 1943, 1944, 1945, 1946, 1947, 1948, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2031, 2032, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 2049, 2050, 2051, 2052, 2053, 2054, 2055, 2056, 2057, 2058, 2059, 2060, 2061, 2062, 2063, 2064, 2065, 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2070, 2071, 2072, 2073, 2074, 2075, 2076, 2077, 2078, 2079, 2080, 2081, 2082, 2083, 2084, 2085, 2086, 2087, 2088, 2089, 2090, 2091, 2092, 2093, 2094, 2095, 2096, 2097, 2098, 2099, 2100, 2101, 2102, 2103, 2104, 2105, 2106, 2107, 2108, 2109, 2110, 2111, 2112, 2113, 2114, 2115, 2116, 2117, 2118, 2119, 2120, 2121, 2122, 2123, 2124, 2125, 2126, 2127, 2128, 2129, 2130, 2131, 2132, 2133, 2134, 2135, 2136, 2137, 2138, 2139, 2140, 2141, 2142, 2143, 2144, 2145, 2146, 2147, 2148, 2149, 2150, 2151, 2152, 2153, 2154, 2155, 2156, 2157, 2158, 2159, 2160, 2161, 2162, 2163, 2164, 2165, 2166, 2167, 2168, 2169, 2170, 2171, 2172, 2173, 2174, 2175, 2176, 2177, 2178, 2179, 2180, 2181, 2182, 2183, 2184, 2185, 2186, 2187, 2188, 2189, 2190, 2191, 2192, 2193, 2194, 2195, 2196, 2197, 2198, 2199, 2200, 2201, 2202, 2203, 2204, 2205, 2206, 2207, 2208, 2209, 2210, 2211, 2212, 2213, 2214, 2215, 2216, 2217, 2218, 2219, 2220, 2221, 2222, 2223, 2224, 2225, 2226, 2227, 2228, 2229, 2230, 2231, 2232, 2233, 2234, 2235, 2236, 2237, 2238, 2239, 2240, 2241, 2242, 2243, 2244, 2245, 2246, 2247, 2248, 2249, 2250, 2251, 2252, 2253, 2254, 2255, 2256, 2257, 2258, 2259, 2260, 2261, 2262, 2263, 2264, 2265, 2266, 2267, 2268, 2269, 2270, 2271, 2272, 2273, 2274, 2275, 2276, 2277, 2278, 2279, 2280, 2281, 2282, 2283, 2284, 2285, 2286, 2287, 2288, 2289, 2290, 2291, 2292, 2293, 2294, 2295, 2296, 2297, 2298, 2299, 2300, 2301, 2302, 2303, 2304, 2305, 2306, 2307, 2308, 2309, 2310, 2311, 2312, 2313, 2314, 2315, 2316, 2317, 2318, 2319, 2320, 2321, 2322, 2323, 2324, 2325, 2326, 2327, 2328, 2329, 2330, 2331, 2332, 2333, 2334, 2335, 2336, 2337, 2338, 2339, 2340, 2341, 2342, 2343, 2344, 2345, 2346, 2347, 2348, 2349, 2350, 2351, 2352, 2353, 2354, 2355, 2356, 2357, 2358, 2359, 2360, 2361, 2362, 2363, 2364, 2365, 2366, 2367, 2368, 2369, 2370, 2371, 2372, 2373, 2374, 2375, 2376, 2377, 2378, 2379, 2380, 2381, 2382, 2383, 2384, 2385, 2386, 2387, 2388, 2389, 2390, 2391, 2392, 2393, 2394, 2395, 2396, 2397, 2398, 2399, 2400, 2401, 2402, 2403, 2404, 2405, 2406, 2407, 2408, 2409, 2410, 2411, 2412, 2413, 2414, 2415, 2416, 2417, 2418, 2419, 2420, 2421, 2422, 2423, 2424, 2425, 2426, 2427, 2428, 2429, 2430, 2431, 2432, 2433, 2434, 2435, 2436, 2437, 2438, 2439, 2440, 2441, 2442, 2443, 2444, 2445, 2446, 2447, 2448, 2449, 2450, 2451, 2452, 2453, 2454, 2455, 2456, 2457, 2458, 2459, 2460, 2461, 2462, 2463, 2464, 2465, 2466, 2467, 2468, 2469, 2470, 2471, 2472, 2473, 2474, 2475, 2476, 2477, 2478, 2479, 2480, 2481, 2482, 2483, 2484, 2485, 2486, 2487, 2488, 2489, 2490, 2491, 2492, 2493, 2494, 2495, 2496, 2497, 2498, 2499, 2500, 2501, 2502, 2503, 2504, 2505, 2506, 2507, 2508, 2509, 2510, 2511, 2512, 2513, 2514, 2515, 2516, 2517, 2518, 2519, 2520, 2521, 2522, 2523, 2524, 2525, 2526, 2527, 2528, 2529, 2530, 2531, 2532, 2533, 2534, 2535, 2536, 2537, 2538, 2539, 2540, 2541, 2542, 2543, 2544, 2545, 2546, 2547, 2548, 2549, 2550, 2551, 2552, 2553, 2554, 2555, 2556, 2557, 2558, 2559, 2560, 2561, 2562, 2563, 2564, 2565, 2566, 2567, 2568, 2569, 2570, 2571, 2572, 2573, 2574, 2575, 2576, 2577, 2578, 2579, 2580, 2581, 2582, 2583, 2584, 2585, 2586, 2587, 2588, 2589, 2590, 2591, 2592, 2593, 2594, 2595, 2596, 2597, 2598, 2599, 2600, 2601, 2602, 2603, 2604, 2605, 2606, 2607, 2608, 2609, 2610, 2611, 2612, 2613, 2614, 2615, 2616, 2617, 2618, 2619, 2620, 2621, 2622, 2623, 2624, 2625, 2626, 2627, 2628, 2629, 2630, 2631, 2632, 2633, 2634, 2635, 2636, 2637, 2638, 2639, 2640, 2641, 2642, 2643, 2644, 2645, 2646, 2647, 2648, 2649, 2650, 2651, 2652, 2653, 2654, 2655, 2656, 2657, 2658, 2659, 2660, 2661, 2662, 2663, 2664, 2665, 2666, 2667, 2668, 2669, 2670, 2671, 2672, 2673, 2674, 2675, 2676, 2677, 2678, 2679, 2680, 2681, 2682, 2683, 2684, 2685, 2686, 2687, 2688, 2689, 2690, 2691, 2692, 2693, 2694, 2695, 2696, 2697, 2698, 2699, 2700, 2701, 2702, 2703, 2704, 2705, 2706, 2707, 2708, 2709, 2710, 2711, 2712, 2713, 2714, 2715, 2716, 2717, 2718, 2719, 2720, 2721, 2722, 2723, 2724, 2725, 2726, 2727, 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ry as well as the details of the finding. He must explain what he was doing in the locality in which he found the watch. The endless formality has much truth in spite of the fact that it is distorted.

The play pictures a commissioner who, voluntarily deaf to every warning of impending public danger, shows himself unjustly suspicious of honest people. He is given a lesson when a man with nerve enters his office. Then, at the point of a revolver, the poor commissioner is forced to put out the fire, open the window, remove his shoes, and lock himself in the coal bin, from which he is not released until he is numb with the cold. The dialogue is extremely witty , vivid, and funny.

"L'Article 330"*

"L'Article 330" is one of Courteline's most famous judicial farces. This is a play which Boston officials would probably condemn as shocking, but they would probably condemn most of Courteline. Here the scene is laid in court, and a rather ridiculous story

*Modern-Théâtre, Fayard et Cie.

by as well as the details of the killing. He does
 explain what he was doing in the locality in which
 he found the weapon. The evidence formerly has much
 value in view of the fact that it is destroyed.
 The play contains a considerable amount of violence.
 It is full of every variety of interesting incident
 and, above all, it is a very successful piece of
 fiction. He is given a lesson which will serve
 to his office. Then, at the point of a revolver,
 the poor constable is forced to put out the fire,
 open the window, remove his shoes, and look himself
 in the coal fire, from which he is not released until
 he is dead with the cold. The dialogue is extremely
 witty, vivid, and funny.

"L'Article 333"

"L'Article 333" is one of Goncourt's most in-
 teresting stories. This is a play which Goncourt
 officials would probably consider as shocking, but they
 would probably condemn most of Goncourt's work. The
 scene is set in court, and a rather ridiculous story

is told of a peculiar revenge a man took for being annoyed by people looking at him through his windows. Evidence is piled up to the extent of thousands of complaints, but no witnesses are called, as there would be too many. The characterization here is superficial, but the satire is brilliant. The court proceedings are particularly gay.

Here La Brige is made the prey of a law which forbids his dressing like a Scotchman in his own room, although he may dress as a Turk or a Mexican. It is in this play that Courteline has some of his most pointed remarks as regards law. In speaking of justice and law, he says: "Ce sont là deux demoiselles, qui, sorties de deux pères, se crachent à la figure en se traitant de bâtardes et vivent à couteaux tirés, tandis que les honnêtes gens, menacés des gendarmes, se tournent les pouces et les sangs en attendant qu'elles se mettent d'accord."

And again: "-----Neuf fois sur dix, la Loi, cette bonne fille, sourit à celui qui la viole."

is told of a person who was a man who for being
accepted by people looking at him through his win-
dow. Evidence is piled up to the extent of two
hundred of complaints, but no witnesses are called,
as there would be too many. The characterisation
here is superficial, but the entire is brilliant.
The court proceedings are particularly gay.

Here in Brice is made the play of the which
forbids his dressing like a Scotsman in his own
room, although he may dress as a Turk or a Mexican.
It is in this play that Goussier has some of his
most pointed remarks as regards law. In speaking
of justice and law, he says: "On voit la justice
sauter, qui, sortant de leur place, se précipite à
la figure de la justice de la justice et vient à
quelque chose, tandis que les hommes sont, quel-
que les gentilles, se font les poudres et les
sauter en attendant qu'ils se mettent à sauter."
And again: "----" "----" "----" "----"
cette bonne fille, comme à celui qui la viole."

"Les Balances"*

Another farce that ridicules existing laws is entitled "Les Balances." Again the protagonist is La Brige. This time he comes to a provincial lawyer with his woes. No matter what he does, he gets into trouble with the law. He has bought a house and is prevented from repairing it because it projects over the street. Since the roof is in poor condition, slate falls from it and injures pedestrians who sue La Brige. The only advice the lawyer can give him is, to set fire to the house, collect insurance, and buy another house that doesn't project over the street. He must become a brigand to get his just due; the law gives him no justice; perhaps he can solicit it through crime.

"La Paix chez soi"*

"La Paix chez soi" is a masterpiece from which all jocose exaggeration is excluded. Trielle is unfortunately married to the acrimonious, pretentious, and capricious Valentine, who goes as far as counterfeiting her husband's signature. She is a complete

*Modern-Théâtre, Fayard et Cie.

ingénu who sees no further than her whims. Trielle becomes Courteline's mouthpiece and says: "La femme ne voit jamais ce que l'on fait pour elle; elle ne voit que ce que l'on ne fait pas." Valentine, who is simply Courteline's conception of woman in general, has so developed the habit of lying, that without any effort she extricates herself from the most dangerous and delicate situations.

"La Paix chez soi" is in the same vein as "Bou-bouroche" but is much more severe. The same basic psychology is common to both plays: the cowardice of the male in love, pitted against the wiles of woman.

"La Conversion d'Alceste"*

The first of Courteline's plays to be produced at the Comédie Française was written in 1905 for Molière's two hundred eighty-third anniversary. It is intended as a sequel to Molière's "Misanthrope" and like it, is written in verse. Courteline wanted to have among his works one play in classic form, for he

*Modern-Théâtre, Fayard et Cie.

felt that by writing his farces he had missed his vocation. He had regarded himself as a poet, and had wanted to make his mark in poetry.

The play brought a great deal of favorable criticism. Such critics as Nozière (in "Gil Blas"), Guy Launay (in "Le Matin"), François de Nion (in "l'Écho de Paris"), and Catulle Mendès claim that Molière is again brought to life here. They agree that Courteline's style is here irreproachable, that the verse is full and sonorous, and that Molière himself might have signed the play as his own.

If one reads "La Conversion d'Alceste" immediately after reading "Le Misanthrope" the two do seem like two acts of the same play. The second simply amplifies the story. Alceste is now married to Célimène, who is still as coquettish as ever, and is willing to be charmed by his friend Philinte. Since Alceste is really good at heart, he decides not to be disagreeable any longer, to be more indulgent with his fellow-men. Consequently, he praises a new sonnet by Oronte. Yet he is still too much himself to sponsor it, and so incurs the wrath of

Oronte. One touch here that is like Courteline's other plays is the fact that at the end he has to pay the attorney a fee and costs as part settlement of a lawsuit he has won.

Yet the play as a whole, with a decidedly classic turn, little resembles his other works. It is more literary, but none the less facetious. It seems more like something of Molière's than like something of his own. The verse is delightful and the satire is keen. The comic element is apparently light, yet profoundly sad. It is highly amusing, but is not in itself a unit, as it is entirely dependent on the earlier play. The language and sentiment are exceptionally fine, and are the factors that made the Comédie Française accept the play. This play led to the acceptance of others. In 1906 "La Paix chez soi" was played at the Comédie Française, and in 1910 "Boubouroche" was made part of its repertory.

...the touch here and there...
...the play is the best of the kind and has to
...the attorney's fee, and costs are not excessive
...of a lawyer he has won.
...the play as a whole, with a thoroughly
...classic tone, it is a masterpiece of the kind.
...is more literary, but more the less footed one.
...it seems more like something of a classic's touch
...live something of his own. The verse is delight-
...and the action is keen. The comic element is
...apparently light, yet profoundly sad. It is slightly
...and, but is not in itself a unit, as it is entire-
...ly dependent on the earlier play. The language and
...sentiment are exceptionally fine, and are the factors
...that make the Comedie Française accept the play. This
...play has to be mentioned of course. In 1808 the
...Parisians of the Comedie Française
...and in 1810 "Bamboules" was made part of the reper-
...toire.

"Mentons Bleus"*

"Mentons Bleus" by Georges Courteline and Dominique Bonnaud is the definitive title of a play whose earlier version (1903) was entitled "Victoires et Conquêtes." The play itself is simply a café scene with old-time actors as the principal characters. They talk of their great successes until they become so excited and agitated that the innocent listener, M. Réfléchi, is hurt. The dialogue is similar to that in some of Courteline's earlier plays. The scene, for the play is no more than a scene, has nothing in common with the elevated style and procedure of the previous play. It is simply one more picture of life in the café; that the subject under discussion is actors and their work does not alter the fundamental situation.

"La Cruche"***

"La Cruche ou J'en ai plein le dos de Margot" written by Courteline with the collaboration of Pierre Wolff, is in two acts, and consequently much longer than most of the plays discussed. Here we again have the artistry that makes Courteline stand out from among his contempo-

*Stock, 1906

**Illustration Théâtrale, 1911

rarities. The intrigue is well developed, and holds the reader's interest. The humor is deep-rooted and tinged with pathos. The melancholy strain shows a knowledge of life and real people. The dialogue is vivid and alive; it gives the impression of genuine conversation. The characters are neither good nor bad; they are ordinary human beings. True, Lavernié has a heroic strain, but so have a great many people. The play has fantasy, remarkable observation, and above all, truth.

The love scene between Lavernié and Margot at the close of the first act has tremendous power. It makes similar scenes in the works of Porto-Riche fade entirely, for it is so tense. Here the psychology of love is well developed.

Margot, who gives the play its name, is a rather weak personnage who prides herself on the fact that she can't say no. She tells us: "La nature m'a refusé le pouvoir de répondre: 'Je ne veux pas' à quiconque me dit: 'Je veux.'"

Lauriane develops from a rather happy-go-lucky sport into a character that is really touching. The

scene in which he asks Margot to marry him is particularly well drawn.

As to Lavernié, he embodies Courteline's philosophy. He takes life as it comes, without too much worry over what happens. As an artist, he tells us: "Le fait du véritable artiste n'est pas de se complaire en ce qu'il fit, mais de le comparer tristement à ce qu'il aurait voulu faire."

Some of Courteline's last plays, such as "La Paix chez soi," "La Conversion d'Alceste" and "La Cruche" show such exceptional power, such artistry of writing, that one begins to wonder whether this strain won't become stronger in him than the feeling which prompted the earlier farcical plays. Had he written during the last decade of his life, would his plays have been more serious? Possibly they would, and yet, "Mentons Bleus" certainly is much weaker than either the play which preceded or the one that followed it.

Parts of "La Cruche" are reminiscent of Musset, but here there is more solid foundation and less of the bantering which marks Musset's comedies. Certainly critics

are justified when they say in speaking of the play:

"Elle est la vie même; elle fait, d'une banale aventure d'amoureux, un petit chef-d'œuvre d'observation, d'humour, et d'ironie."*

*M. H. Debuschère in "La Presse" (quoted on cover of Illustration edition)

Estimate of the Man and his Work

(Concluding Summary)

Courteline is endowed with a humorous spirit. All that he writes is witty and seems based on the principle that one must be amusing at all costs. He has developed the habit of being funny. To his humor he joins a depth of observation. He observes officials, officers, proprietors, magistrates, the people everyone sees; but his penetration is deeper than that of the casual observer. He gives his characters grotesque names, and often considers them in an inebriated state. Thus deforming them, he makes of them homely caricatures which, showing a true picture, show it in an exaggerated form. His plentiful gaiety is communicative. It is not spontaneous, but shows evidences of being carefully planned, and unfolds like a geometric theorem. This laborious drollery is nevertheless powerful and efficacious. His plays bubble over, and one is forced to laugh aloud even when reading them. Seeing them must bring the house down with gales of laughter.

Courteline proceeds methodically to discover the incidents of daily life that are perfectly evident.

Treating perfectly ordinary subjects, he makes us see the ludicrous side of them. His gaiety is based on a deep knowledge of reality which he manifests in simple and picturesque style.

His vivid buffoonery pleases the middle class man and makes Courteline popular, for his plays are easy to understand. They produce a physical laugh, for they jest about the life one lives, not about fantasies. His gross caricature and careful buffoonery are close to, and yet distinct from, reality. In spite of the fact that almost all his plays are one-act plays, within such brief limits he leaves a lasting impression.

It is not difficult to see why Courteline is the greatest comic writer of the epoch. His style is individual. He is the master of a dialogue that scintillates with everyday realism. At times he is crude, but we forgive him that for his drollness. His plays are short in extent, slight in manner, but great in truth and penetrating observation. He gives us many picturesque scenes. All his characters seem caricatures. They are all more or less ludicrous. The names of his

personages fairly bubble with gaiety. Nothing can be funnier than his titles. Yet his plays are no less funny. He elaborates upon every imaginable detail. The fun results from incongruity, surprise, exaggeration, shouts, and gesticulations.

Although Courteline has long been admired, he still remains more popular than ever. He is acknowledged as the master of the farce, since his simple and powerful caricatures illustrate the truth more than they deform it.

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L'Affaire Champignon Sept. 8, 1899 La Scala
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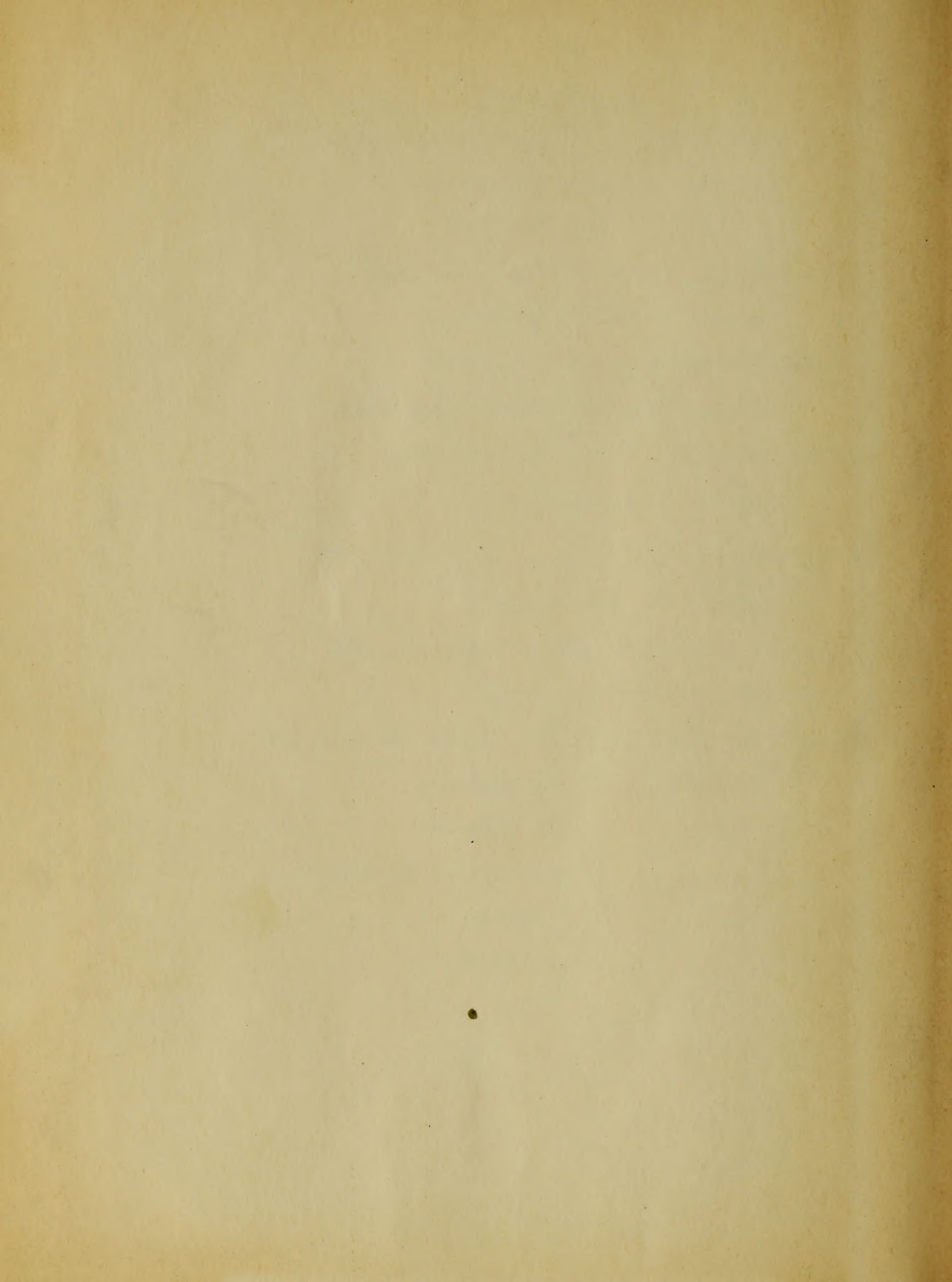
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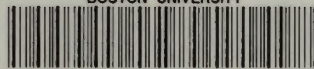
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